

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9763
INFO USMISSION NATO
SECDEF WASHDC
USNMR SHAPE
AMEMBASSY PARIS
CINC USAFE RAMSTEIN
CINC USAREUR HEIDELBERG
CINC EUR VAIHINGEN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: NATO, AWACS, MILI, GW
SUBJECT: LEBER INTERVIEW ON DEFENSE ISSUES

REF: BONN 10873 DTG 291640Z JUN 77

THE JULY 11 "FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE" CARRIED A REPORT
OF DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER'S CONVERSATION WITH JOURNALIST ADELBERT
WEINSTEIN IN WHICH LEBER MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

-- A GERMAN AS SACEUR'S DEPUTY: A GERMAN WILL FILL
A NEW SACEUR DEPUTY POSITION TO COMPLEMENT THE BRITISH
FOUR-STAR DEPUTY. LEBER SAID THE FRG HAD NO INTENTION
OF STRIVING FOR THE SACEUR SLOT WHICH, IN HIS OPINION,
MUST ALWAYS BE FILLED BY AN AMERICAN. (COMMENT: WHILE
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LEBER WOULD NOT SAY WHICH GERMAN GENERAL MIGHT GET THE
NOD, THE PRESS SPECULATED IT WOULD BE EITHER ARMY
INSPECTOR HORST HILDEBRANDT OR SACEUR DEPUTY CHIEF OF
STAFF LOTHAR DOMROESE). LEBER ALSO INDICATED A GERMAN
GENERAL WOULD RELIEVE THE DANE BRODERSEN AS
COMAIRBALTAP ON OCTOBER 1.

-- AWACS: LEBER REPEATED HIS COMMITMENT TO AWACS, EMPHASIZING THAT IT MUST BECOME A NATO PROJECT. HE REFERRED TO THE VISIT OF AN AWACS AIRCRAFT TO THE FRG "SOON" TO GIVE ALL THOSE INVOLVED IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THE RADAR SYSTEM. LEBER SAID HE COULD NOT ASK ANY POLITICIAN OR GENERAL TO APPROVE SUCH AN EXPENSIVE WEAPON SYSTEM WITHOUT KNOWING THE PROJECT IN THE MINUTEST DETAIL. LEBER SAID AWACS WOULD BE A COMPLETELY AMERICAN SYSTEM, INCLUDING THE AIRCRAFT. HE CONTINUED THAT THE AIRBUS WAS NOT A SUITABLE CARRIER FOR THE RADAR SYSTEM. LEBER THEN ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT "...PROCUREMENT AND DELIVERY OF MATERIAL FOR MILITARY PURPOSES CAN NOT ONLY ROLL ON A ONE-WAY STREET FROM AMERICAN TO EUROPE. PROCUREMENTS WILL BECOME TWO-WAY STREETS. CONCRETELY, IF WE ACCEPT THE BOEING AS THE AWACS CARRIER, THE AMERICANS MUST PURCHASE SEVERAL AIRBUS MACHINES."

-- OFFSET FOR THE BRITS: LEBER SAID HE COULD NOT ANSWER A QUESTION ABOUT WHETHER THE FRG WOULD CONCLUDE AN OFFSET AGREEMENT WITH THE UK, SINCE THAT WAS NOT IN HIS AREA OF COMPETENCE AS DEFENSE MINISTER.

-- EXCELLENT ARMS COOPERATION WITH THE FRENCH: LEBER PRAISED THE OUTSTANDING FRANCO-GERMAN COOPERATION IN COMMON PROJECTS FOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WHILE POINTING OUT THAT HE SAW LITTLE CHANCE FOR NEW CO-PRODUCTION AGREEMENTS, SINCE THE BUNDESWEHR HAD BEEN OUTFITTED WITH SECOND-GENERATION WEAPONS SYSTEMS.

COMMENT: WE FOUND TWO OF LEBER'S REMARKS PARTICULARLY INTERESTING. FIRST, THAT HE WOULD "SOON" HAVE AN AWACS AIRCRAFT BROUGHT TO THE FRG FOR INSPECTION BY THOSE OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MILITARY AND FINANCIAL DECISIONS TO PROCEED WITH THE PROJECT. THIS IS CONSISTENT WITH WHAT SENIOR FMOD OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN TELLING US ABOUT LEBER'S SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS ON AWACS (REFTEL). LEBER STILL HAS NOT MENTIONED A SPECIFIC DATE FOR THE AWACS DEMONSTRATION IN THE FRG, ALTHOUGH THE SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER TIMEFRAME WOULD CERTAINLY SEEM TO FIT THE DESCRIPTION "SOON."

SECOND, LEBER'S LINKAGE OF AMERICAN PURCHASE OF THE EUROPEAN AIRBUS IN RETURN FOR ACCEPTANCE OF THE BOEING AWACS IS A NEW WRINKLE. WHILE OTHER SYSTEMS -- SUCH AS THE LEOPARD TANK -- HAVE, IN THE PAST, BEEN LINKED WITH AWACS, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THE EMBASSY HAS HEARD ANYTHING ABOUT THE AIRBUS CONNECTION. WE WILL BE

FOLLOWING UP WITH FRG OFFICIALS AS OCCASION PERMITS TO
TRY TO DETERMINE THE IMPORT OF LEBER'S REMARK. CASH

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